

## CHAPTER THREE

### Presence

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In this chapter we turn to presence and why it matters. After describing three powerful authority dynamics that shape presence (confidence, competition, and control), we consider intended and unintended presence, and the links between presence and transference. Throughout this section, we invite you to explore what you know about your own presence and whether you are preoccupied with confidence, competition, and/or control.

#### *3.1 Presence matters*

Most of us have a day when we work with colleagues, run an event, or encounter a client and think:

"I could have handled that better".

"I let myself down".

"Who does he think he is? It was my meeting".

"I had an off day. They didn't see the best of me".

"I lost it there. What happened?"

Sometimes, these experiences start to repeat. I begin to notice people responding to me in ways that are surprising or puzzling, perhaps not responding at all. I can identify situations that are "difficult", perhaps where I lose my confidence and talk too much or too little or where I end up taking the minutes rather than leading the discussion. In these situations, I am becoming aware of a problem with my presence. Perhaps there is a mismatch between how others

encounter me and how I think of myself. Maybe I behave as I always do, as others expect me to: speaking out or playing the fool; easily derailed and flustered; always the good cop and never the bad cop.

In Chapter Two, we looked at how identity shapes professional practice through the dynamics of recognition, regulation, and revelation. In that chapter, the focus was on the internal world and how I develop a sense of myself overtime, giving some recognisable coherence to who I am. Identity can also be thrust upon me uninvited, by others. So it is with presence. Others can be complicit in shaping my presence in ways that are unhelpful to my practice, my development and my client's development. To influence and maybe change how others encounter me, I need to own my presence.

But becoming aware of how colleagues and clients experience my presence is not easy. Here are comments from consultants I have worked with about how they encounter their colleagues.

### Box 3.1 Encountering colleagues

I can't stand it. I bet she tells another one of her tearjerking stories and we are all expected to listen and be moved.

He hogs the space all the time. I don't want to listen to him.

He has to be the last to speak, as if he's special or speaking on behalf of us all.

She hides behind complicated language. Maybe she doesn't have much to say?

She's not my mother.

I don't know why he assumes he has to be in charge. He cannot take up any other role in this group. I am fed up of working with him.

She has this idea about giving honest feedback and doesn't seem to notice or care that she's insulted half the people in this room. I'm glad I won't be seeing her again.

I know if I reveal something in the team meeting that actually concerns me, he'll cross examine me about it and I'll wish I hadn't said anything.

I don't even notice she's there sometimes. I can't imagine her leading a project.

He always agrees with the boss. Can't he think for himself?

He arrives at the last minute and then expects to take over, as if I'm the warm-up act.

I always cover for her with clients. It was really embarrassing last week when she brought the wrong

This sort of feedback is not usually given face to face and we are left to infer how colleagues and clients encounter us from their behaviour. When I am confronted with their experiences of me directly, it can come as a shock and be difficult to relate

to. Here is an example.

Philip, an experienced, internal performance management consultant met with a new group of as committed to helping them by bringing his practical common sense, track record of making things happen, and a sharp sense of humour.

He sits back and speaks very little during this first meeting. He takes lots of notes and maintains a poker face. This is his usual behaviour when meeting new people. By the end of the meeting he feels meet their targets unless they get their act together. He makes a joke about bringing in someone more experienced to steer the project.

This isn't well received and a senior line manager informs Philip that the only things he's seen Philip internal consultant?

Training courses on media and presentation skills offer a way to access direct feedback about how others encounter me, albeit in very specific situations. Typically, such courses coach participants in how to overcome their fear of speaking to an audience or to camera; how to relax and be confident by preparing; how to stay on message and not be tricked or side tracked; and how to make your body language work for you. They urge us to plan and practice for our performances by having a rehearsal, in front of a mirror if necessary. Even then, the unexpected can derail the most orchestrated of presentations, as happened with President George Bush and the shoe-throwing incident. (BBC News, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7782422.stm> last accessed 29 January 2013.)

It would be impossible to try and bring this amount of effort and forethought about how I present myself to my everyday working life. It would also be bizarre. Few situations are as controlled and contrived as a presentation. Even a radio or TV interview is a different matter, with the possibility of substantial and unscripted dialogue. How will I react if I don't like a question or feel this is outside what was agreed? The film director Quentin Tarantino was interviewed by a British TV journalist about violence in his film *Django Unchained* and real life violence. (See the report in *The Guardian* newspaper, 11 January 2013.) When asked about the links between enjoying film violence and real violence, Mr Tarantino snarled "Don't ask me a question like that, I'm not biting". He refused the interviewer's attempts to pull him into a debate and told him flatly: "I'm here to sell my movie. This is a commercial for the movie, make no mistake..."

Some newspapers described Mr Tarantino as losing his cool and as "49 going on 14" (*The Independent*, 13 January 2013). Another commentator took *the journalist* to task for not challenging Mr Tarantino on the point about selling the movie, perhaps because it was true! Mr Tarantino wasn't being interviewed about a news story, it was about giving him some air time to promote his film. During the interview, viewers could see the journalist looking for his next question by quickly flicking through pages of notes. See link in end note.

This was great adversarial TV. The video clip went viral on social media. It shows us how presence emerges in the moment, an outcome of interactions between me and

you, each of us bringing our own (mis)understandings about why we are there and what is expected. This encounter also shows us some of the routines that both the interviewer and Mr Tarantino fall

back on when things don't go according to plan (respectively, leafing through reminder notes and refusing to answer questions). Did Mr Tarantino lose his cool? Did the interviewer stick to his questions regardless? Did either of them go home and think:

"I could have handled that better",  
 "Who does he think he is? It was my interview".  
 "I lost it there. What happened?"

Both of them have the advantage of being able to watch themselves on video and perhaps glimpse how they were encountered by the other. Those of us who aren't usually filmed in our work have to find other ways to catch sight of our presence and its impact on others.

### *3.2 What is presence?*

Presence is about:

- "being there" (Kahn, 1992), in different situations, at different times, with different people and
- how I choose to bring myself to each of those situations (Berg, 2002).

Some argue that presence is consistent over time and place and that consultants should aspire always to being "fully present". This confuses presence with being present—the extent to which I am paying attention to what I am doing and what's happening (Schneider, 2008, p. 60). My presence when I am negotiating contracts may be different from my presence when I am giving a presentation to clients or planning work with colleagues. My presence at home may be unlike my presence at work, where I exile my cheerful and chatty persona and bring my serious and uncompromising self to the fore. I can be fully present in each of these situations and yet my presence may be very different.

This contextual quality might suggest that presence can be selected, chosen and changed at will. But presence is social. It is forged in psychic space, in the way you and I relate to each other, here and now. Presence is not an attribute of the individual but is a negotiated outcome between those present, a negotiation in which some are more influential than others. How I bring myself to my work may be influenced as much by whom I'm working with and what we are working on as my own preferences about how I am encountered.

Presence is inescapable. Whilst I may not be present (because I am daydreaming, lost in myself, preoccupied or otherwise not engaged in what is going on) I always have presence, whether intended or unintended. The comedian whose jokes fall flat, the consultant who bears no resemblance to the superwoman depicted on her website, and President Obama's poor showing at the first televised debate for his 2012 re-election, are examples of a mismatch between intended and unintended presence. The consultant who bores her client and the CEO who speaks falteringly of

his company's bright future don't intend that others encounter them in these ways. But unintended presence isn't always problematic. Sara, the project manager, who surprises herself and others by turning around a difficult meeting, may receive feedback

like "I didn't think you had it in you" and "That was great! I'd like to see more of that Sara".Because presence is inescapable, knowing how my colleagues and clients encounter me is a core consulting competence. Finding ways to do that can be a challenge.

On the P3C programme, we designed sessions specifically to offer and receive feedback on each other's presence and we describe some of these in detail in this book. Box 3.2 lists some of the ways my presence is described by participants of The Tavistock Institute P3C programme.

Box 3.2 My presence	
In my professional life, my presence has been described in many ways, including:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*containing</li> <li>*curious</li> <li>·challenging</li> <li>·helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*scary</li> <li>*authoritative</li> <li>*playful</li> <li>*angry</li> </ul>

This feedback helps raise my awareness of my presence (of how others encounter me) and gives me opportunities to develop my presence as an essential tool of my work. But these are not only characteristics of me. They are expressions of how others encounter me and this has significant implications for my consulting practice. I need to think about how my clients and colleagues might experience me and how my presence helps or hinders my crafting a context that is both appropriately reassuring and sufficiently challenging to support their work, development, and change. This requires me to work with my presence as intervention, presence that is designed to help something happen.

To consult effectively, I need to own my presence. I need to think about my presence as the active presentation of myself in relation to my clients and colleagues and the task(s) we are working on, rather than the passive transmission of cues about who I am and what we are doing (Rettie, 2005).

Davide, a media strategist and internal consultant in a fast paced Italian telecoms company, is much asked to join project teams to restructure a department, grow market share, or change technologies. He has been in the same role for several years but is never invited to lead a project.

Davide knows that when faced with uncertainty and surprise his confidence disappears and his self-esteem falls. He thinks of himself as "not good enough". His routine is to mentally search for mod-disinterested or frozen. No-one had said anything to challenge Davide but the implied feedback is "It's OK. That's how you are". Davide feels trapped with a presence that doesn't serve his needs and that



he cannot escape from. Maybe it serves the needs of his colleagues, in some way?

ce between my needs and anxieties and  
This space may be tightly or loosely  
counter may be unique or ongoing and we  
r needs and anxieties or not. It is unlikely  
discussed each other's presence and what  
(Walsh & Whittle, 2009).

national business school. He is thought of  
several successful new programmes and  
with his found it and feels the weight of  
emic standing.

perfectionist" and expects high standards from one (however he defines it). He wastes time on them. Their behaviour (following his advice and hiding from him) puzzles him and he has to lead this group and get the job done.

and rules out any roles for them other than  
 an bringing himself in this "take no  
 e collabora-tive and less competitive

...ing in the feedback from colleagues and  
...p raise awareness of how I encounter  
...er myself, how others encounter me, and  
...mprise a potential space for developing  
...en though I want to change how I am  
...w others relate to me.

bal consulting firm. With an outstanding  
e works with authority in her areas of  
"role.know-how.She wishes she could be  
elf to work,her fun loving and frivolous  
he time.

table:well worn,like a skin or some old  
pressive or as efective as I would like,but  
fferent. It's unusual to think actively about  
o my work, as a core consulting  
intervention is about understanding the  
ostip of Chapter One of this book. These  
sk being stuck with a presence that fails to  
ange agents and pull us into presence  
va above.



professional life because it does not adequately affirm my sense of myself. This can happen if my presence has fallen out of my consciousness and I am on autopilot, not noticing how others encounter me. Presence traps can also arise when: I am on the receiving end of powerful projections about my presence (think of school teachers, politicians and TV news readers); I have become lazy and neglectful about sustaining my presence with colleagues and clients (think of rock stars and movie stars); I am having to try very hard to be something I am not (think of whistleblowers, ex-military personnel).

Are you in a presence trap? Work down the list of indicators in the analytic below to see if any sound familiar.

#### Analytic Presence traps.

I always end up taking the role of...(devil's advocate, clown, presenter, doom merchant, social secretary) in this group and I'm bored with it/resent it/tired of it.	Ye s	N o
My confidence in my competence can be knocked easily.		
People often describe me as...and I don't understand why.		
It's usually me who says the unsayable/the nice things/the apologies.		
I'm so busy doing this job, I haven't got time to think about my presence.		
I don't usually risk saying what I think/what I know/what I feel.		
I have to work very hard to appear to be (...something I'm not...) and I'm exhausted.		
You can't please all the people all the time but it would be good to please...(my boss/my colleague/my client) sometimes.		
People know what to expect from me and, if they don't like it, well that's their problem.		
Usually, I wait to be asked/until last/after the event before I speak or offer suggestions.		
I find I do most of the talking/the decision-making/the planning/the contracting.		
I wish other people would do more rather than wait for me to take the lead.		
I dread working with...(him, her, them, that equipment) in case I make a fool of myself.		
I don't manage my time well. I try to fit in with others instead of speaking up.		
I can't help it, I find it really hard to concentrate in those meetings and I just		

drift off.		
Can you add any of your own?		

In any situation, there is no one "best" presence. We have found, when working in consulting and change, that the Principle of Equifinality applies whereby "a system can reach the same final state from different initial conditions and by a variety of different paths" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 30). There are many ways to bring myself to a client situation and be present that can be effective. When you have a moment, take a look at this video clip featuring Itay Talgam talking about great conductors and the differences in their presence [http://www.ted.com/talks/itay\\_talgam\\_lead\\_like\\_the\\_great\\_conductors.html?%09](http://www.ted.com/talks/itay_talgam_lead_like_the_great_conductors.html?%09) (TED Global, 2009. Last accessed 23 September 2013).

### *3.3 What shapes presence?*

On receiving an invitation to a wedding or other event, many of us will be familiar with the phrase "your presence is requested...". In addition to being there, the invitation may hold other clues about how you might bring yourself to the event: dress codes; timings; the activities to be expected and the location. Such cues help us to make choices about how to present ourselves in ways that will be appropriate and help us take up our roles effectively (Krantz & Maltz, 1997). The mother of the bride does not usually dress like the bridesmaids! But there are few situations as ritualised and where presence is as prescribed as weddings. So what shapes presence in less regulated and more negotiated and ambiguous contexts?

#### **3.3.1 Authority dynamics**

Throughout Chapter Two, we worked with identity dynamics as potent shapers of presence. In this chapter, we describe authority dynamics and how they shape professional presence. We have found three, in particular, that can significantly contaminate presence. These are the dynamics of confidence, competition, and control.

Authority emerges in the relationships between roles, tasks, and boundaries. Its particular form and character is governed by:

- How clearly roles are understood, tasks defined and the boundaries of roles and tasks maintained.
- How these can be changed, who can change them and how.
- The resources, rituals, and routines that are available and in place to maintain or change roles, tasks and boundaries (Hirschhorn, 1988).

Authority can be clear, offering containment for difficult tasks and problematic roles. It can also be ambiguous or contested. The *Apprentice* TV show offers many examples where someone who is appointed as project manager for a task is unable to influence team members or control choices. Sometimes, the authority of the project manager is contested by another member of the team who considers him/herself more competent or more experienced or more deserving and competition ensues. At other times, the project manager loses his/her confidence and then their authority. The team finds itself adrift, without the containment of knowing who does what or how.

The ways in which each of us takes up and exercises our authority reflects our own experiences of authority relations when we were young and the ways in which we

were managed and controlled by those we experienced as "in authority". In adulthood, it is impossible to predict

who will be relatively passive and succumb to the wishes of others and who will take a more authoritarian stance and expect to have their wishes followed (Jacobs,2005).Passive-aggressive is a combination of the two and has a number of modes. It is indicated by someone taking up the "yes...but" position in response to a request,direction, or suggestion. Another variant of the passive-aggressive exercise of authority is where someone seems naive or innocent but has the capacity to evoke strong feelings of anger and frustration in others. This is an example of a projection dynamic,which we discussed in Chapter Two.A third mode of passive aggressive behaviour is signalled by withdrawing or non-participation.

An articulate and well-educated risk management specialist,James has gravitas. When he speaks,brooding presence. Everyone knows that a meeting won't start until he arrives or that a decision will not be made until and unless James indicates his agreement,however indifferently.

On the next few pages,we look further at confidence,competition, and control, three frequently occurring authority dynamics that shape presence and practice.

### *3.3.2 Confidence*

The word confidence comes from the Latin "confidere" to trust in someone or something.I may trust the methods I use, the people I work with, or myself. If I "trust the process" I have con-fidence that the way my consulting work is designed and delivered is fit for purpose,even though there may be some doubters and cliffhangers along the way. If I take you into my confi-dence,I trust you.Self-confidence is trusting oneself to do something; to behave appropriately;to contract effectively; to leave with dignity; to intervene with authority.

But self-confidence can become over-confidence,wherein there is no room for doubt and therefore no room for development. If I am overconfident, I do not entertain the possibility of failure. I can be experienced by others as arrogant. Conversely, the absence of confidence implies a lack of trust, in a group,a method,an intervention design,a client,or myself.This can evoke anxieties and ways to defend against the worry of uncertainty,disapproval,and potential failure.

Karl is always well prepared.A performance improvement specialist,he likes to find out as much as he can about his clients before working with them. He thinks through each meeting before hand,making detailed notes to remind himself not only of what todo but why this is a good idea. His presentation ready for workshops or training sessions and he makes notes on the way home,just in case he needs to refer to the day's events later.Karl doesn't trust himself to access his own knowledge and expertise in the moment. His preoccupation with preparation makes him resentful of clients and colleagues who"just turn up and get on with something unexpected happens. He prefers to consult on his



own and tends not to work with anyone else for very long.

Small incidents and experiences can significantly affect my own self-confidence and the confidence I have in others. If I have less time than I thought to make a pitch, if the microphone doesn't work, or if there are building repairs being carried out in the room next door, my belief that I can do a good enough job can be shaken. Sometimes these unexpected events can become useful repositories for doubts that I have already but which I have not acknowledged. Such "unthought knowns" (Diamond, 2008) about my lack of confidence in myself can suffuse my whole presence.

Lisa is a high profile change project manager in banking. She has become a change manager only herself taking risks, saying the unsayable to those senior to her and supporting any individual given find her convincing in her new role either. So she tries to be helpful. Perhaps then they might be less inclined to be critical of her?

In Chapter One we described how transitional objects can help to manage these sorts of anxieties and free up the self to be present in ways much more supportive of the tasks in hand. Transitional objects come in many forms. In the examples above, Karl's preparations helped to contain his anxieties. Lisa has constructed a role of rescuer that also serves to rescue herself from the anxieties of her daunting new role. I know a strategy consultant who relies on having access to a bottle of mineral water and drinks slowly from it, occasionally, to calm his fears from time to time. Some consultants take on a different appearance, develop mannerisms or use a "work" voice to maintain their confidence in their professional selves. Do you?

Lawrence had learned that if he speaks slowly and quietly people stop to hear what he is saying. He uses this technique when he wants to slow down what is happening in workshops and maintain his confidence in his capabilities.

Confidence can develop into the arrogance of overconfidence and a sense of superiority and felt disregard for clients and/or colleagues. Arrogance can be a maladaptive strategy (Crombie, 1993) for protecting a wounded and fragile self; a self that hides behind a grandiose and authoritarian presence.

A successful OD consultant, Hannah gossips about her clients with her colleagues, her friends and whether she does or doesn't like them and whether they are smart and manipulative or thick and to be manipulated. She isn't at all averse to manipulating them, to meet her own needs for respect, for adulation, for superiority.



Analytic Confidence dynamics.

Take a few moments and remember one or two occasions when confidence was a problem in your work. This might be your self-confidence (too much or too little) or confidence in the way you practice or the techniques you use.

Occasion one

Occasion two

What contributed to the confidence problems?

If confidence remains a problem, how do you think your anxieties shape your authority and your presence?

### *3.3.3 Competition*

Western societies are becoming more competitive. A ranking mentality prevails, in which everyone is designated a winner or a loser. Losers face marginalisation and exclusion, the modern day untouchables.

Competition occurs when there is:

- a contest, conscious, or unconscious, to secure what are believed to be scarce resources, such as an attribute or characteristic, or a position in a social, economic, or psychological ranking;
- a felt need to defend against feelings of inferiority.

Tina is the director of strategic change in a media organisation. She is quick to understand a situation and used to handling difficult trade union negotiations. She manages her anxieties by writing notes during meetings. This helps her to maintain a careful and considered presence in working situations she describes as battlefields. Tina has noticed she is more and more silent in meetings, working furiously inside herself to come up with the perfect comment or intervention. She wants to be more present by saying what she thinks and feels, rather than sitting in silence until she can think of something that will wow people.

Her company has a reputation for a quick turnover of directors and Tina knows she is only as good as constantly judging herself. She is in competition with her ideal self, someone who says things that will stop people in their tracks and make her, and her peers, feel that she is the best.

Some people make a career out of criticising others because they don't feel they are good enough to make it themselves.

Anton has a reputation for saying what's wrong with a plan, an action, or a person. This is especially baked ideas is almost irresistible. He suddenly became very aware of his critical stance and disruptive presence when someone said to him "You always jump on people and close things down. Can't you be more positive sometimes?"

Feelings of inferiority fuel imagined victories over others that take place only in Anton's inner world. These feelings tend to develop in childhood. Experiences of not being as good as someone else, or of being told you are not as good as someone else, are taken up as identity narratives. But sometimes inferiority feelings can be motivational, leading people to succeed in sport, business, and everyday life, against all expectations. The motivation is to avoid the feelings of inferiority, that sense of being less than another. The clearest indicator of inferiority is being ignored or overlooked, as if I don't exist. Not being seen or acknowledged can be more painful than direct rejection. Sometimes, it's easier to disappear before this happens.

Edward is a coach and organisational change consultant with a small consulting firm in the Netherlands. He knows himself well: which of his own attributes help and hinder his work; the types of personal anxieties, Edward becomes preoccupied with evaluating himself and is no longer present in his work. He is concerned about this self-obsession. He wants to find ways to sustain his engagement with others and be more present and available to his clients by switching off his judgemental inner voice.

Consultants manage their anxieties about competition, about being judged, about wanting or rejected, in different ways, some more successfully than others. Gary uses, and perhaps over-uses, the term "we" rather than "I" to reduce the felt distance

between himself and his big

spend, global clients. Melanie works in heavy engineering, in process improvement and whole life costing, and uses humour to contain her anxieties about not being noticed and possible rejection. The feedback she gets is that she is not serious enough. She says "But that is the problem, I am deadly serious". Humour helps to put some distance between Melanie's need to be taken seriously, to be able to compete with others, and her experiences of being taken lightly, of not being a competitor. At the same time, it undermines her authority as a serious player.

Analytic Competition dynamics.

When do you get pulled into competitive dynamics?

Are there some people you just can't help but criticise or situations where you tend to find yourself seeing only problems and short comings? What do you do?

What do your (re)actions do to your authority?

Do people pay more or less attention to you?

What would be a good outcome for you in a competitive situation? What would this mean for your presence?

### *3.3.4 Control*

The dynamics described under confidence and competition could be relabelled dynamics of control. Many things we do involve the exercise of power and influence to achieve control over something, over someone, over myself. Sometimes being in control and the avoidance of being out of control become needs in themselves, needs that shape my authority and presence. Control takes many forms. Control dynamics associated with authority often become visible in groups which are allocated tasks but the methods for working on those tasks are not given, not agreed, or are contested. Here, control can be confused with authority.

Manuel likes to lead project groups. He wants to make sure they deliver to time and budget and that the job is well done. It will probably mean working extra hours and some sleepless nights to make sure sibility. It is difficult to be friends with people and make sure the work is done. Somebody had to do it and he can't imagine anyone else leading the project.

Katarina wishes someone else would take up the project lead role. She has worked with Manuel a lead but that didn't mean he knew everything nor had authority over everything and everyone. Some-times a more collaborative approach to working on the tasks and allocating responsibilities would be much more effective, and probably better for Manuel's health.

Taking control without the authority to do so is risky. In this type of situation, consultants may strive to exercise control by taking it from those with formal authority, with consequences for how they are encountered.

Having just completed another development programme, Johnny is keen to bring his new found under-theory and understand how to intervene effectively. He now considers himself something of an expert. His boss is very experienced and known for being able to help clients with challenging and potentially clearly relevant. In fact, it could help his boss out of a sticky moment. Johnny speaks up, offering his preoccupation with control meant he couldn't see that he was subject to the same regressive group behaviours as everyone else.

When there is anxiety about my capacity to contain my emotions, control can be used to manage the potential threat of revealing my feelings, whether frustration, disdain, loss, love, embarrassment or envy.

Always aiming to improve his practice, Brian has a formidable repertoire as an OD consultant. He is keen to share his models, theories and designs with the expectation that others will share theirs. This does not serve him well. He is often disappointed and annoyed that people don't meet his standards. He starts to play things closer to his chest, deliberately not revealing the extent of his know-how and resources to retain control over his feelings.

For some of us, the felt need is not so much to be in control but to avoid responsibility for controlling what happens. We can always find ways to de-authorise ourselves so that no-one takes notice of what I say or do by:

- Asking for permission to say or do something "If it's OK with you..."
- Looking at someone else (usually the person with authority) before I speak or



make a decision

- Changing my mind at the slightest resistance
- Making a joke of a serious intervention
- Getting pulled into a pair dynamic with one other person in the room.

Control used to undermine, rather than take up, your authority was described to me by one consultant as "working hard to be in the water rather than on the river bank". Her presence is of someone who talks too much, who thrashes about without making much progress. Sometimes, she keeps her knowledge and competence well hidden. The impact of her presence is that colleagues do not listen to her ideas or want to work with her for very long.

Analytic Control dynamics.

Identify a few situations when you have felt the need to take control.

Now identify when you have felt the need to avoid being in control of what is happening.

What strategies do you usually use to exercise control?

What strategies do you use to avoid being in control?

Describe how you think others encounter you in these situations.

Now revisit all three authority dynamics that shape presence (confidence, competition, and control) and complete the next analytic, the presence index.

Analytic Presence index.

CONFIDENCE	Y- Yes	N-No
I can rely on my experiences as data		
I wait to be asked to speak/intervene		
I use theory to help to make sense of what is happening		
My confidence in my competence can be knocked easily		
I need my peers to affirm my competence		
COMPETITION		
I maintain my curiosity and welcome surprises		
I can face "not knowing"		
I can use competition rather than be used by it		
I am not derailed by rejections		
I entertain the possibility that I am wrong		
CONTROL		
I always keep the task I am working o in mind		
I use time as a containing device		
I sometimes allow myself to be seduced by powerful others		
Lack of structure makes me anxious		
I have routines to draw on when I need to contain myself		
I use data to inform my actions		

presence-colleagues,clients,or supervisors.

Take note of:

- what others confirm about your presence that you already know
- \*any surprises about how authority dynamics shape your presence
- feedback about the impact of these authority dynamics on others.



### *3.4 Presence intended and unintended*

Presence is about "being there" (Kahn, 1992), in different situations, at different times, with different people and how I choose to bring myself to each situation (Berg, 2002). As presence is social, an outcome of interactions between myself and others, it has an element of unpredictability. How people encounter me may or may not be in line with my intentions.

My intended presence may be in tension with:

- presentations of myself I am aware of and want to avoid (which are known from experience, from feedback, or from coaching or development courses)
- presentations of myself I am unaware of (the routines, habits and compulsions I have learned over time and which are subconscious)
- presentations of myself that are imposed or given (such as my age, colour, gender, nationality, accent, job title, reputation).

I have a dog, Hendrix, a big-eyed, lively Springer Spaniel that people are drawn to. He has a lovely presence! I think he's so well behaved he can go anywhere. Overtime we have negotiated, through treats and scolds, how he behaves or presents himself when we go for a walk, drive in the car, or go to the pub. But if the context changes, perhaps another dog pays Hendrix unwanted attention or is playing with a ball that Hendrix wants, we can encounter him as badly behaved. He may not think so and will remain unaware of how he is encountered by us unless we can bring our concerns to his attention. Of course, I can't have a conversation with Hendrix about this presence. Such conversations can be just as challenging with people. The idea of intended and unintended presence can be difficult to comprehend.

Trevor is infuriatingly helpful. He opens doors, pulls out chairs, notices when lights need switching on that he participates little in the discussions and activities of the professional development programme and exclude him from the need to participate and learn. But this unintended presentation (of escapee or avoidant participant) is noticed and his self-exclusion becomes the focus of attention; not at all what he intended.

The potency of these unintended presentations varies with context and circumstance. Aged eighteen, I entered a bar with a male friend. Unknown to us, it was an all-male bar. There was a terrific noise and I was booed out! In that situation, my presence preceded me. It was imposed and I was unable to influence how I was encountered. No amount of training or development would have helped. I could only withdraw.

Figure 3.1 shows the relationship dynamics between these elements of presence:

intended,unintended,imposed,negotiated,encountered and not encountered.

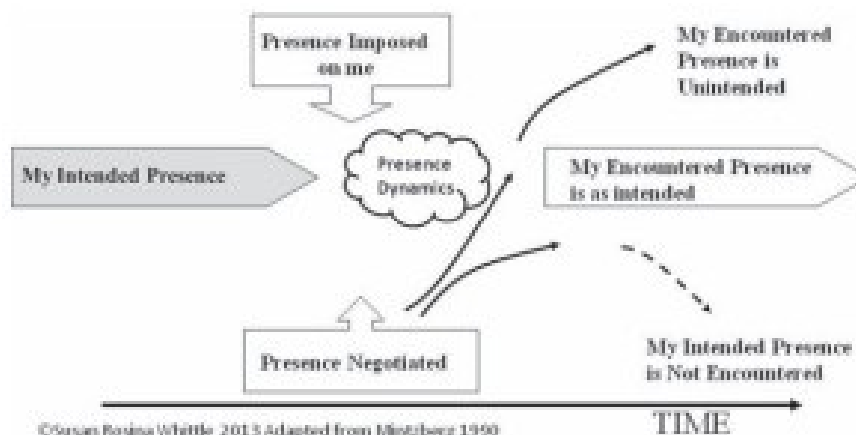


Figure 3.1 Presence intended and unintended.

·An intended presence is that which corresponds to how I want others to encounter me—for Trevor, this was as a staff member, not a learner on a development program. For Trevor to be encountered this way would have required collusion (conscious or unconscious) by actual program staff.

·A negotiated presence arises in the course of interaction, as Trevor's did, at least temporarily. A negotiated presence may be sustained and survive as the encountered presence, or be challenged and confronted as inappropriate.

An imposed presence is what Susan encountered in the all-male bar. She became the focus of attention and persona non-grata! This was outside her control, something like a forced error in tennis where, no matter how good you are, you are just unable to keep the ball in play.

·An unintended presence is a by-product or parallel of what I intend. In the example above, this was "Trevor the irritating" rather than "Trevor the helpful" as he intended. But unintended presence can also be encountered when we "rise to the occasion" or "push the boundaries" and behave functionally outside our usual repertoires.

Where intended presence is realised, I experience no surprises. I am able to conjure up and control how I am encountered time after time. If I am very attached to this presence, I will find ways to defend it, and there is little chance of development and change. With a less deliberate and more emergent approach, in which presence is negotiated in the moment and unintended presentations of myself encountered, I am in a potentially more creative space. Here I can explore new ways to "be there" and bring my professional self to work.

**Whilst these streams of presence have been laid out as discrete options, in reality they mutually configure all the time, as we engage with others in the moment. Presence dynamics are always in tension. If I find the more open and negotiated way I bring myself to our meeting is met by your clinging to how you always bring yourself to our meetings, I may step back into my own routines.**

Now complete the next analytic by thinking of experiences and situations in which your presence has been predominantly: (1) as you intended; (2) imposed by others;

## RESOURCE-FUL CONSULTING

(3)negotiated in the moment; or (4) surprisingly unintended.



## Analytic Streams of presence.

Presence	Experience/situation
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These streams of presence (intended,imposed,negotiated, and unintended) configure how I am encountered every time I bring myself to work.The four are in tension and mould presence simultaneously:sometimes one prevails and at other times a different stream prevails.This figure and ground dynamic is in perpetual motion and can shift in an instant in response to the behaviours,perceptions,and emotions evoked by consulting and change. This shifting con-figuration can be experienced by both consultant and client and typically emerge when either is faced with:

- Challenges to identity
- Anxieties about being judged and of judging
- Experiences of loss and uncertainty
- Threatening encounters with risks,and manipulation
- Ambiguous roles and relationships
- Others clinging to safe routines and behaviours.

Here's an example of someone taking action to retain ownership of her presence,by choosing how she brings herself to the situation, in the face of it being imposed through association with others.

The only time I put on lipstick is to  
avoid walking in with people I work with.

All too often,consultants are ill prepared to work with the emotional entanglements of presence dynamics(Benjamin, 1998).This can undermine both the consultant's and the client's capacity to be present and hinder the practice of consulting and change. Figure 3.2 shows some of the entanglements that can shape how I am encountered by others.

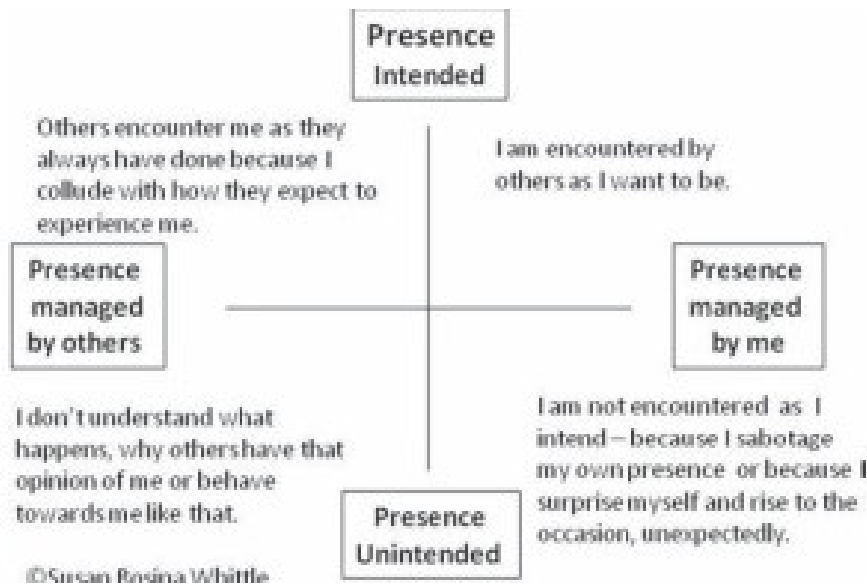


Figure 3.2 Encounters and entanglements.

Individuals and groups engage in behaviours that are unintended and sometimes unconscious, arising from the unspoken and often unacknowledged anxieties of those present. All too easily, I can find my presence shaped by another's intent, rather than my own, and I become a part in someone else's script. My presence can be caught by the dynamics of the encounter pulling on my identity, for example when I take up the role of the knowing leader, the fool, or cynic. I can even be pulled into competition for one of these roles. Or I may take flight from a difficult task or awkward moment by withdrawing or pulling rank, either to save face or take the blame.

Being aware of how emotional entanglements shape my presence is an essential consulting competence but where do they come from? In Chapter Two we worked on entanglements linked to identity and explored projection and transference. Here we revisit the idea of transference but in relation to presence.

### 3.5 Presence and transference

In Chapter Two, transference was described as an unconscious process whereby I might relate to another person as if they are someone else, from another time and place.

Transference is the phenomenon whereby we unconsciously transfer feelings and attitudes from a person or situation in the past on to a person or situation in the present. (Hughes & Kerr, 2000, p.58)

Family figures, figures of love and affection, of hate and rejection, figures of wish-fulfilment and figures that are lost are often evoked in situations which stir up memories and feelings. Some of the comments in Box 3.1 suggest transference at work. Those of us occupying roles



as authority figures will be used to attracting feelings from clients,staff,and students,that originate elsewhere. Unintentionally,we find ourselves behaving as a father figure,boss,or teacher from time to time. I might find myself relating to a mature and able management con-sultant as my son because of an imposed or unintended aspect of his presence; maybe his smile,his height,or his sense of humour remind me of my son.

Have you heard children repeating the words of their mothers and fathers as if their own?Transference means that when others encounter me they may have access not only to my own self but also to those significant others (my mother,father,siblings,teachers,bosses,etc.)that I carry with me and that constitute aspects of myself. These are revealed in my unintended presence.Others also bring important figures from their past into our encounter as their identities are evoked and revealed. This complex field of selves, identities, transference,and counter-transference creates a potential space in which presence is shaped and reshaped by what the transference evokes.

We can think about this space as a matrix (See Figure 3. 3) comprised of time and place in which:

- time can be now (the present) or then (the past)
- place can be here (where I am at the moment) or there (another place from the past).

	Here	There
Now	1	2
Then	3	4

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Figure 3.3 Presence and transference.

Any figures or places from my past or your past may be evoked in the transference between us. For simplicity, the following describes the potential transference relationship between you and me.

- If I am relating to you here (in this place) and now (at this time), I am in quadrant 1 and what might be called fully present (Kahn, 1992);
- If I am relating to you now (at this time) and there (as if we are in another place) I am in quadrant 2 and perhaps thinking about our work with another client or colleague rather than the work in hand. I am transferring my feelings from that into what we are doing at the moment.
- In quadrant 3, I am relating to you here (in this place) and then (at some time when we worked together in the past). Maybe we had a disagreement in this office yesterday which is still unresolved and leaking into today's work.
- In quadrant 4, I relate to you as if then (another time) and there (another place), maybe when I was your boss rather than your client.

If we then add the possibility of my encountering you "as if" you are my father, brother, daughter, ex-boss, old girlfriend, or any other significant figure from my past, and we have the possibility of you encountering me in the same "as if" way, the stage is set for possible confusion and misunderstanding. This is where many problems with presence arise. If I am relating to you as if you are my mother and you are relating to me as if I am your teacher, or friend, we will probably struggle to disentangle how we encounter each other and how we can work well together. Similarly, if I am present in quadrant 3 of Figure 3.3 and you are in 1, my behaviour may seem inexplicable to you.

We all have different propensities for others to stir up thoughts, feelings, and figures from our past. Some things are so deeply buried they are unlikely to be revived. But beware, transference happens at the most unexpected times and places. You know it is transference dynamic when:

- You can say "I have no idea where that came from" about someone's behaviour towards you.
- You find you are withholding yourself from someone or are drawn toward someone inexplicably.
- When you have strong emotions that seem disproportionate to the matter in hand.

Here are some actions to help you own your presence and stay in the here and now: Notice:

- What I am feeling
- Who I pay attention to and who I ignore
- What I choose to speak about and what I leave out
- What my body is doing—hands, head, eyes, voice, feet, legs, posture—and whether I am firmly grounded in the here and now or:
  - I have one foot in another time and place
  - I am speaking with a voice from my past
  - I don't see you but someone else.

Being aware of the potential power of transference to shape presence is essential for mind-ful practice. To own my presence, rather than succumbing to transference dynamics, I need to be in touch with aspects of myself that I may not have revealed but that may be evoked in the moment. This awareness comes with experience and in the working through, with colleagues and shadow consultants, of the "what happened there" moments in consulting work.

### ***3.6 What do I know about my presence?***

For Jung, the self has a dual presence: that which is known (the persona) and that which is unknown (the shadow). It is important to recognise the influence of the shadow on practice. In Chapter One, we looked at the Johari window and did some analysis of the four windows in relation to presence, including the blind spot and the unknown quadrants. In this chapter we have examined how presence can be intended and unintended and how emotional entanglements can lead to my presence being managed by others, rather than me.

The shadow self is hidden from others and from oneself. It is disowned, perhaps because it is embarrassing or shameful. It is "not me". For example, whilst immediate feedback might help me to gauge whether people find my jokes funny, I may be unaware of my unintended presence: perhaps I am not taken seriously as my inept attempts at humour are undermining my authority. Disowned aspects of myself (perhaps I gossip about people behind their backs or envy others' success), can influence how others encounter me in ways I may not be aware of or even deny. If others do not reveal how they encounter me, if they collude in hiding or denying how I am encountered, I may continue to be blissfully unaware of my unintended presence. It can remain hidden from me indefinitely and lead to perpetual puzzlement about why I get this or that reaction from people. For those of us consulting to and leading change, this can significantly diminish professional impact and lead to the construction of all sorts of rationales to explain away presence issues. Mary Tolbert describes presence as the use of self with intent (Tolbert, 2006). The more I know about my presence, the more effectively I can use it as an instrument of change in my practice. To use presence as intervention, and myself as an instrument of change, requires some awareness and understanding of:

- how you encounter me and how I encounter myself
- the dynamics that shape that encounter
- which of those dynamics I can work with and which I need to contain.

We have worked with these throughout this chapter. Now try completing the next analytic, listing both desirable and undesirable aspects of your presence. If you can't complete it on your own, have conversations with

colleagues and/or with clients.



Analytic What I know about mypresence.

When working with my clients,I think desirable aspects of my presence are...	When working with my colleagues,I think desirable aspects of my presence are...	My clients describe desirable aspects of my presence as...	My colleagues describe desirable aspects of my presence as...
When working with my clients,I think undesirable aspects of my presence are...	When working with my colleagues,I think undesirable aspects of my presence are...	My clients describe undesirable aspects of my presence as...	My colleagues describe undesirable aspects of my presence as...

Now collate the results you consider important under the four headings in the chart below:

Any aspects of my presence described as desirable by me,my colleagues and/or my clients	Any aspects of my presence described as undesirable by me,my colleagues and my clients	Any aspects of my presence described as desirable by my colleagues and my clients but not by me	Any aspects of my presence described as undesirable by my colleagues and my clients but not by me
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From this analysis, list those aspects of your presence you feel you need to work on. This is your Presence Development Agenda (PDA) Part one.

You might want to think about whether there are aspects of your presence that you feel are lacking, ways to behave and ways to present yourself that you would like but are somehow missing or unachievable.

Write them down. This is your Presence Development Agenda (PDA) Part two.

We will be returning to your PDA's in Chapter Seven.

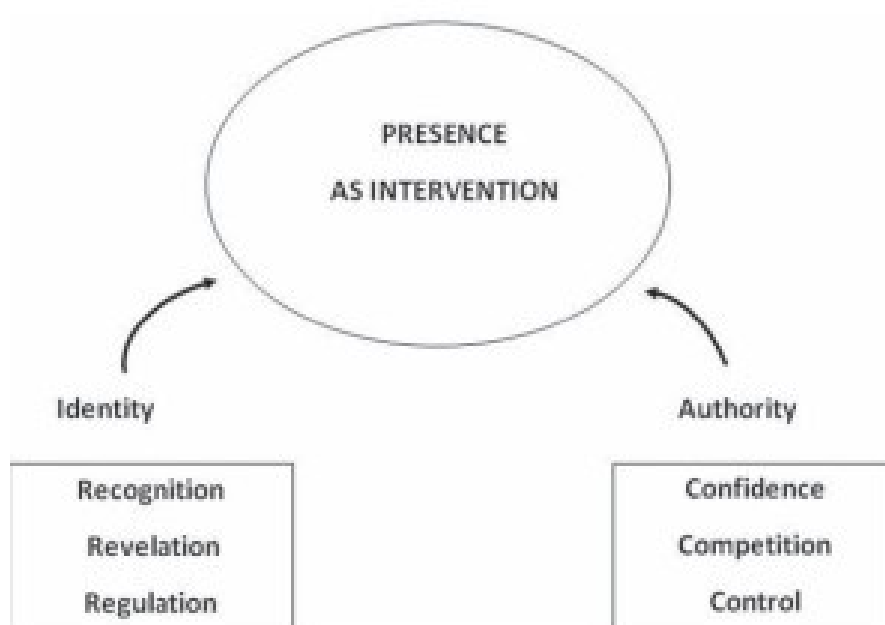


Figure 3.4 Presence as intervention.

### 3.7 Summary

In Chapters Two and Three we have explored how identity and authority dynamics shape presence. In the practice of consulting and change, presence is an intervention that can help or hinder our work with clients and colleagues, as shown in Figure 3.4.

We have seen how preoccupations can undermine my capacity to use myself as instrument and how practitioners can be caught out by the power of transference and the complications of unintended presence.

For presence to support my practice and client development, I must own my presence since "...the ultimate success of an intervention rests with the practitioner and what one brings to the process. In other words, self is the most important tool of the practitioner". (Tolbert & Hannofin, 2006, p. 70).

Much of our practice takes place in role. In Chapter Four, we turn to role space, both as a resource and a mediator between individual, group, and organisation dynamics in consulting practice.

### Notes

1. Watch the interview at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2013/jan/11/tarantino-krishnan-guru-murthy?INTCMP=SRCH> last accessed 29 January 2013. A full transcript of the interview is also available at <http://www.channe14.com/news/tarantino-uncut-when-quentin-met-krishnan-transcript> last accessed 21 November 2013.

2. <http://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/terry-prone/opinion-questions-to-be-asked-about-celebs-right-not-to-reply-219456.html> 01/14/2013 last accessed 28 January 2013.

3.<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007qgd/dlips>

4. If you recognise this scenario, have a look at Roberts, V. Z. (1994). The Self-assigned Impossible Task. In: A. Obholzer & Roberts Vega Zagiessr (Eds.), The Unconscious at Work (pp. 110-120). London: Routledge.

5.<http://www.postsecret.com/>last accessed 2 February 2013.

